



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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SPENCE WELCOMES PRESIDENT'S RECOGNITION OF THE NEED TO INCREASE DEFENSE BUDGET TO ADDRESS SERIOUS SHORTFALLS

In response to President Clinton's September 22, 1998, letter to Secretary of Defense Cohen on deepening readiness concerns, Rep. Floyd Spence (R-SC), Chairman of the House National Security Committee, issued the following statement:

"Although the President has not committed to increasing the defense budget, I nonetheless think his letter marks an important milestone in the debate over the adequacy of the Administration's defense budget. I welcome the President's long-overdue use of the 'bully pulpit' to admit the existence of serious quality of life, readiness and modernization problems and to recognize the need for additional defense spending. With the President's admission, the odds are improving that the bipartisan, bicameral support for increasing future defense budgets that exists in Congress may be headed in the direction of an executive-legislative branch consensus.

"The quality of life, readiness and modernization problems raised yesterday by the President are not new. Many of us in Congress have been sounding the alarm for years, yet have been met with nothing but repeated Administration denials. In fact, earlier this year, the bipartisan leadership of the House National Security Committee wrote to the President and the Congressional Leadership highlighting the serious shortfalls affecting our military forces and urging the renegotiation of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA), 'in order to provide for a sustained period of real growth in defense spending.' For example, an increase of at least \$50 billion over five years will be required just to keep pace even with today's record low inflation. Providing for a 'sustained period of real growth' as I have recommended will require significantly greater increases.

"Fixing the deepening problems affecting our military forces will require sustained, bipartisan support along with the President's leadership. If the President leads on this issue, I believe he will have bipartisan support in Congress and the support of the American people. As the military services struggle with growing requirements and underfunded budgets, the President will have every opportunity in the months ahead to demonstrate his leadership by providing significant spending increases in DOD's fiscal year 2000-2004 five-year defense plan. The President will have every chance to prove the old adage that 'actions speak louder than words.'"

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A copy of the April 22, 1998, letter from the bipartisan leadership of the House National Security Committee to the President and the Congressional Leadership is attached.